

ANGELO GAUDIO

COMPARATIVE EDUCATION DISCOURSE IN ITALY  
AFTER WWII:  
THE CASE OF GIOVANNI GOZZER

IL DISCORSO SULL'EDUCAZIONE COMPARATA IN ITALIA  
DOPO LA SECONDA GUERRA MONDIALE:  
IL CASO DI GIOVANNI GOZZER

*Presentation of the writings of comparative education of Giovanni Gozzer, authoritative protagonist of the pedagogic debate and adviser of many ministers of the public education in the second postwar period. He tried to introduce in Italy the international public discourse on the connections between education and economy. This activities were developed before in the circle of the Unione Cattolica Italiana Insegnanti Medi (UCIIM) and then in the direction of the Centro Europeo dell'educazione in Frascati, et the same time a unofficial government think tank and an agency for the lifelong learning of teachers.*

Presentazione degli scritti di argomento comparatistico di Giovanni Gozzer, autorevole protagonista del dibattito pedagogico e consigliere di molti ministri della pubblica istruzione nel secondo dopoguerra. Cercò di introdurre in Italia il discorso pubblico internazionale sui legami tra istruzione ed economia. Le sue attività si svolsero prima nell'ambito dell'Unione Cattolica Italiana Insegnanti Medi (UCIIM) e poi nella direzione del Centro Europeo dell'educazione di Frascati, al tempo stesso un centro studi ufficioso e una sede per la formazione permanente degli insegnanti.

*Key words: Italy; Education; Comparative education; History; Giovanni Gozzer.*

Parole chiave: Italia Educazione; Educazione comparata; Storia; Giovanni Gozzer.

*Comparative discourse in Italy in the 40s*

The synthesis offered by Callegari (2016 – also Telmon 1987) requires some additions. Italian Ministry of national education since 1942 published the “Bollettino di legislazione scolastica comparata” (D’Arcangeli 1997).

It offered a meager information of a juridical nature with original insights on “minor” countries of central-eastern Europe but also with some openness on authors like Dewey, however not unknown to the more comprehensive Italian culture, for example, an authoritative academic pedagogist like Luigi Volpicelli (Zizioli 2009, Alatri 2013. Tarquini 2009, 335), collaborator of the Minister Bottai and head of the academic pedagogy of the University of Rome until 1970, had already promoted the publication of a book Hessen on the American pedagogical philosopher (Hessen 1937) and offered good information about the soviet school (Volpicelli 1950). About Russia there was also a very good scholarship thanks to Tommaso Napolitano, a scholar with an area studies approach (Maffei 2010).



An overall image of the common sense of the comparative discourse after Second World War is offered by the synthesis of Luigi Romanini (Romanini 1947-1951; see Schirippa 2018).

The idea that the development of the school needs long-term planning is found in one of the most ambitious documents produced by the entourage of Minister Bottai the school's master plan (Ministero 1942, Cassese 1974 Gaudio 1995). This document had an almost clandestine publication, in the catalog of Italian libraries (opac.sbn) results only in the internal library of the Ministry of public education, but the idea se was destined to rise again.

### *Education and first essays*

Giovanni Gozzer (1915-2006) (Antonelli and Arcaini 2016, Chiosso 2017)<sup>1</sup> graduated in humanities from the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart (Milan) and then he was a teacher in the high schools of Trento. After the liberation of Trento province, he became provisional Provveditore agli Studi in 1945 on the joint designation of the CLN of Trento, of which he was president, and of the Allied military government.

In 1947 Gozzer held a sabbatical semester in Geneva attending among others the Piaget courses thanks to a USIS scholarship obtained by the initiative of Carleton Washburne well-known student of Dewey who had in the period immediately preceding a fundamental role in the attempt to defascistize the Italian school thanks to his role in the *Allied Control Commission* and his advice given to the Italian government in the drafting of the Elementary School Programs of 1945 Washburne 1970, Cambi 2016, Mariuzzo 2016 c).

From 1948 he began to collaborate with Minister Gonella as secretary of the Commission of inquiry for the reform of the school.

His first comparative essay is *Sette riforme scolastiche* (Gozzer 1948) published by *Unione Cattolica Italiana Insegnanti Medi*, important association that controlled the majority of the secondary teachers' union and that thanks to the synergy between the administration of the ministry and the expertise of the Catholic university was progressively conquering a real hegemony at the head of what we can define as the official pedagogy of Italian state (Sani 1990; Gaudio 1991; Durand 1991, 289; Corradini 2008). The book offers a description of the comprehensive reforms in terms of educational reconstruction examining the cases of Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France, Holland and Hungary, founded mainly on sources of the *Bureau international de l'éducation*.

A first relevant case of receipt of this volume is the dense essay on the subject of education and economy (Oxilia 1949) however inserting it into an overall discourse of spiritualist humanism as a holism: "psycho-pedagogical social didactic".

Gozzer in 1952 published the *Esperienze scolastiche d'avanguardia*. Well-informed publication but regarding the Italian experience, on the line of Codignola and Lom-

<sup>1</sup> There is no entry about G. in Chiosso, Sani 2013 neither in [www.treccani.it](http://www.treccani.it).

bardo Radice, Gozzer spoke about Italian pedagogical idealism as a part of the overall international activism. This interpretation censored the strong relationship between Italian pedagogical idealism and fascism.

Such a scheme of interpretation was adopted also in *Vittorino*: a large volume designed for the continuing education of primary school teachers (Gozzer and Padellaro, 1952). Nazareno Padellaro (Meda 2013; Dell'Era 2016) authoritative ministry official, emblematic figure of the continuity of the state (Pavone 2004) in the administration of public education.

Another interesting volume is Gozzer 1952; a reconstruction of a possible international code of education. Gozzer's preface was marked by prudent Irenism. The impropriety of diction "code" in the juridical sense on the contrary, it becomes a hope that the process that the "Malines Code" had brought to the post-war Constitutions spread to a future Euroepa Constitution. He knows that the postwar Europe was born Catholic and Western and he hopes remained such and extended also to the field of educational policies.

Moreover, these were documents of an organization on which the official representative of the Italian government at Unesco, prof. Giovanni Calò (Scaglia 2013) displayed many reservations (Calò 1962) that emphasized the cultural distance the organization from the positions of the Italian Government.

### *From the 50s to the 60s*

The Italian economic policy of the fifties sees the tormented overcoming of the liberalism of the first republican legislature thanks to figures like that of Ezio Vanoni (Magliulo 2007), that in his scheme of development of employment and income in Italy in the decade 1955-64 places on the agenda of political and economic culture the need for public intervention to overcome the imbalances (Saraceno 1982 259-364) which also contains a brief chapter on vocational training of the workforce with a prevalent focus on vocational education.

In the late fifties and early sixties Gozzer makes known to the Italian public the debate on human capital and educational aspects of global competition in the context of a global competition that if not cease to be political and military, tends more and more to become even economic and educational.

This season was marked by the Conference of Woods Hole (1959) (Bruner 1960; Gaudio 2016, 191) which marked a turning point in the US public discourse on education in the name of the global challenge with the Soviet Union, to be played also in terms of human capital.

A point of junction between the end of centrism and the premises of the center-left in terms of school is represented by the volume (Gozzer 1959 see Ricuperati 1995 731-733) about the decennial plan of development of the school; a pioneer attempt of scholastic planning then reduced by the dynamics of the political decision. Gozzer wide essay made of studies and statistical data for the setting up of a concrete plan

for the development of the Italian school; a very good example of application of his sensitivity for school planning. The political choice of expansion and *comprehensivization* of the secondary school was presented and legitimized as an economic necessity.

In those same months the “Rivista Pirelli” hosted an essay by Visalberghi about “La scuola in Italia e in Europa” which was affected by a sensitivity that is not, despite the diversity of the cultural and ideological profiles of the two scholars (Visalberghi 1959).

(Pedrazzi 1958) publish the reports of conference organized by “Amici del Mulino” (29 to 30 november 1958). The conference is of particular importance because it marks the meeting between the different reformisms, lay, Catholics and socialists, who will give life to the Center-left, and represents a change of tone compared to the conferences of the world in which they were added charges of problems and anti-Christian controversy.

Gozzer debated with Adone Zoli, former prime minister, and especially with Ugo La Malfa republican exponent destined to be one of the protagonists of the political season of the center left and the one immediately following (Soddu 2008) around the fundamental question of considering spending on education as an investment. On that occasion were in the same table, not uncommon in those years, authoritative Catholic voices such as Carlo Perucci and Giuseppe Flores D’Arcais with no less authoritative secular voices such as, among others, those of Guido Calogero and Nicola Matteucci.

In the 1960 congress organized by *Centro europeo dell’educazione* jointly with the *Associazione italiana Fulbright* “Sistemi educativi e metodi di ricerca in Italia e negli Stati Uniti” (Associazione italiana Fulbright 1962) he saw the non-disconcerted collaboration between Catholic experts linked to the ministry and authoritative pedagogists of secular area such as Borghi and Visalberghi, certainly closer to the sensibilities prevalent overseas. We therefore find ourselves in the framework of what Krige (2016) has called US consensual hegemony in Europe. In the pedagogical and scholastic Italian context, this intertwining is more limited and intermittent due to a multiplicity of factors: the weight of the Gentile heritage that passes partly through Catholic environments, just think as in the catalog of a publishing house attentive to the problems of the school as Il Mulino (Attal 2013) the volumes of pedagogy in the academic sense are very few. This seems to us due to the strong distinction between Catholic academic pedagogy (Cinquant’anni 2005) and secular academic pedagogy (Cambi, Federighi, Mariani 2016) that remained tied to their own specific publishing circuits.

The Gozzer report *La dinamica dell’espansione scolastica* combined the presentation of releasing data with a political conclusion in the light of the ongoing transformation of Italy into a modern industrial country, animating the ruling classes not to be afraid of change.

His volume (Gozzer 1958) offers a theoretical discussion of the new school discipline called civic education (Gaudio 2003) introduced in 1959 by the Minister Aldo Moro (Gabusi forthcoming); a very dense treatise that also referred to a large Franco-phone bibliography.

From 1959 since 1972 Gozzer was director of *Frascati European education centre*; a government think tank and an agency for the lifelong learning of teachers.

(Gozzer 1962), a volume of documentation about school and economic planning, in which the reference to the document of the OECE (Organization for European Economic Cooperation, the antecedent of the oecd form 1948 to 1960) is an opportunity to support the reform initiative and the internal positive interlocutor is the Svimez of Pasquale Saraceno (Svimez 1961, D'Antone 2017). What was being called into question was the whole mechanism of the state budget process because school planning would have required reasoning not in terms of budgetary years but of school generations.

He showed that he was well aware of the complexity of the current process when he stated (Gozzer 1962, 75).

What takes place is not yet a new reform of middle school or vocational school, but the insertion of a compulsory secondary schooling period, and of a nature that is unprecedented in the ancient school patterns between primary and secondary school or average of past decades.

Naturally, as always happens with organic phenomena, this change is carried out on the continuity plane: it captures at a critical moment some generations of young people and some groups of teachers on which the wear and tear of the modification necessarily takes place (Gozzer 1962, 75).

Addressing the problems of teachers, came to demanding research directions and policy proposals

It has not yet been possible to find any valid element, some reference point that can indicate if and to what extent the demands of the teaching staff and their satisfaction correspond to valid reasons, both economically and professionally, rather than simple category claims. and generic affirmations of prestige. Staff treatment. In other words, it should be subtracted from the play of the forces of pressure that its mass can determine on political power, and be reported vice versa to a more precise approach of economic driven education politics (Gozzer 1962, 114).

Even in a prudent form, such a language allows us to glimpse a sort of technocratic utopia not easily compatible with the institutions of a liberal democracy.

The essay concluded by offering some indications for a comparative and historical research on the problems of teaching staff, certainly pioneering issues in the Italy of those years.

We could then try a series of comparisons to see, if from 1900 to today, for example if the treatment of teaching staff increased proportionally to the national product per inhabitant; or if instead it has had a completely different course, as it seems quite logical to suppose. As a result, we would at least have good reasons for a debate and a well-founded interpretation of school politics (Gozzer 1962, 114).

The document also included a significant comparative section *Education in the next ten years: National projects in progress. Projects concerning the dynamic and integrated development of education*. It is a type of analysis not dissimilar to that conducted by today's documents of the type of those in the series OECD Education at a glance.

A further moment of Gozzer's vast editorial commitment is his curation of (Parnes 1964), a classic treatise about education and development.

Gozzer 1970 is a very important regarding argument, School planning and educa-

tional systems, and more because it is published in a reference work.

Important considerations of educational economic development theory where it warned about the inadequacy of those external aid interventions towards developing countries based on the creation of some exemplary institutions with standards, and costs, typical of the most developed countries. These considerations, although tacitly, seem to recall those of Illich the reverse of charity (Illich 2012, Gaudio 2018) and those of Freire, showing the economic unsustainability and pastoral counterproductivity of a Latin America church just on US standards.

Through the comparative discourse he came to a radical critique of the existing European school systems, stigmatizing the precocious channelling and the excessive specialization of the single channels and also the lack of attention they place on vocational training and his inclusion in the general framework of secondary education.

Following the participation in one Unesco mission in Spain (Gozzer 1970) is a large and dense contribution about the prospective of educational innovation in that country, where the Trentin professor showed himself once again very well informed and aware not only of the specific “local” scholastic questions but also of the political and ecclesial context in which they were to be found. The context is that of the late Francoism ruled by a technocratic elite in which the role of Opus Dei was predominant (González-Delgado Groves 2017). They thought he could achieve an industrial transformation without a transition to liberal democracy.

Gozzer’s essay focuses on the role of Obra and is well-informed on the many political discussions and ecclesial it aroused, however, not hiding some kind of envious of his ability to carry on the technocratic management that was always one of the cornerstones of his thought.

We can derive some useful lessons from the comparison with the Italian situation: in Italy the level of democracy and freedom, albeit with all the limits of the transition phases, is remarkably high: all the decisions that are taken in the formative field have undeniably an extremely positive underlying inspiration, and they are oriented in the sense of the greatest openness, in the spirit of a very modern and stimulating Constitution. However, these decisions, lacking technical and scientific support, research, preliminary analysis concerning the effects of the introduction of innovations, often end up making the effort of the community sterile, unproductive and expensive; and often they get exactly the opposite effects to those that the legislators or the promoters of the initiatives and the interventions proposed” (Gozzer 1970, 356).

### *Gozzer in the age of 1968*

A result of his Unesco mission in Colombia is (Gozzer 1968); a volume about the relationship between Religion and Revolution in that area. The focus is on the case of Camillo Torres in front of a description of the political reality of that country with speckled tones. The volume was part of the vast interest shown by Italian Catholics in those years towards Latin America (De Giuseppe 2017, Prodi 2016).

In the same theme is inserted his essay on Illich on the pages of *Humanitas* (Gozzer



1972a), an authoritative Catholic magazine in Brescia, an expression of the same environments that included the family of Giovan Battista Montini (Paolo VI) (Gabusi 2006, Zambarbieri 2013, Vigni 2017). It showed awareness of the consideration in which Illich was attempted in UNESCO circles as well as his distinction compared with anarchist utopians. He also concluded by stating that the ultimate result of the criticism of the institutions could have been that of the solitude of the individual.

The prophet of Cuernavaca it was widely discussed in those years but also later on the pages of “Humanitas” (Bassetti Calvi Passerin d’Entreves 1972) and on the pages of “Esprit” (Esprit N° 3, Mars 1972)<sup>2</sup>.

The same Illich, who was then in Rome as a consultant to cardinal Suenens, a member of the Council Vatican II, had been a guest of some conferences organized by Gozzer at the *European Center of Education* in Frascati.

Gozzer showed that he knew his life and his works well and that he was well aware that the heart of the discourse did not concern the school but the institutions of which the school was precisely the prototype, but his reaction was dominated by a sort of horror vacui that becomes horror solitudinis.

Illich is not a utopian [...] utopia presents its design, and the wake that reality moves according to its laws. Illich instead disassembles the mechanism, dissolves it in its many components, dissect them: after which the mechanism can no longer be «reassembled» and no longer has any possibility of functioning. With this procedure, of course, myths, fashions, rhetoric, ideologies and other needs are disassembled; but to reduce us to total nudity, whose final goal is a kind of total annihilation: a destiny certainly not better than what awaits a technological and consumer society made explosive by its own contradictions and its frightening internal suppurations (Gozzer 1972a, 1023).

With these statements explicitly distanced himself from scholars as Ettore Passerin d’Entreves that, on the same pages of “Humanitas”, considered Illich as a classic utopian. However he ended

On the other hand, specialization is the characteristic of the productive and cognitive cultural level of advanced societies: it must therefore take a human measure, this is possible if the languages of specialization (from the television to the computer) are made accessible to everyone and the specialization then becomes a choice, not a conviction or a verdict. Can the training system (here an example of «institution») be oriented in this direction? My answer is yes, provided there is enough culture to guide this hijacking. If instead of this culture we will have only ideological generalizations, nostalgic hypotheses, or destructive theorisations, there will certainly not be any chance to get out of the storm that is already thickening on our society (Gozzer 1972 1030).

Always the result of a mission as part of UNESCO is (Gozzer 1972) about the state of education in China. It is a dense essay that starts from an overall presentation of the experience of Maoist China declaring to refer to the reading proposed by an authoritative Japanese scholar Key Yamada that had defined Mao as the last great incarnation

<sup>2</sup> Numéro Spécial: “Illich En Débat”. Esprit mars 1972 and also “Illich en debat” Esprit 2010 / 8-9 (Août / septembre) Actualité d’Ivan Illich . See M. Winock, 1975 and Winock 2007.

of the Chinese tradition, namely the Confucian “spirit” (Kin 2008). Thus offering an interpretation in which replaces aspects of continuity of the ancient Chinese story, than by a reading of a national case of world communism. Such a statement seems very insightful, especially in light of subsequent events of the Chinese case after the death of the great helmsman.

The Chinese experience is a serious challenge, no doubt, to many of our Western radical beliefs on these four themes: the first shows us that you do not need an elite that thinks (and is formed only in ‘theoretical ways’) as opposed to an “operational-practical” mass that simply works; and that is that in terms of vocational training there can be a constant and reversible exchange of roles; so there is not only a worker who becomes an engineer, but an engineer who returns a worker, and a worker who can be at ease with university teaching. According to the teacher’s role: the recent Chinese experience says, in essence, that teaching as a specific profession (and therefore the ‘corpus, teacher as a more or less privileged profession) may also have no meaning: men endowed with a serious preparation can be excellent teachers, as long as they take care to pass on what they know (Gozzer 1972, 521).

Like most western intellectuals, communists and non-communist, he showed that he took seriously the Chinese cultural revolution and did not understand how it was an episode of the clash inside the Chinese Communist Party. The charm of China in those years was, however, a largely transversal phenomenon (Lombardo Radice 1976, 202-215; Wolin 2010; Buchanan 2012).

The text interweaves the direct testimony of the UNESCO mission in China during the cultural revolution with references to texts of former French Minister Alain Peyrefitte and the book (Myrdal, 1965). Similar sensibilities were expressed in those years also by authoritative Salesians, scholars of comparative education (Malizia 1975).

In 1972 Gozzer resigned from public administration roles and began a new and different season of scholar and publicist, but this is another story.

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